

Feb. 3, 2009

RE: House Bill 257

Dear Committee Members,

I am a consumer writing in support of House Bill 257.

I am a 51-year-old mother of two children. For a number of years my physician has prescribed birth control pills for me. These are NOT for use as a contraceptive (in fact, I was unable to bear children and both mine are adopted), but for an unrelated therapeutic treatment.

I was shocked in the spring of 2007 when the new owners of my neighborhood drug store informed me that they would no longer fill my prescriptions because birth control pills essentially cause early abortions, thereby making them "immoral." Two of the pharmacists working there at the time privately told me they wanted to fill the prescriptions but were ordered not to. The fact that like many, many women, I was using the pills for a condition not related to birth control – though certainly none of their business, in my view – meant nothing to them.

I was fortunate. I live in Great Falls and have other pharmacy options. But I can't imagine the nightmare this kind of policy would present for a young woman, mother – or anyone for that matter – living in one of Montana's many rural communities where there are far fewer options.

As much as I would like to insist that all pharmacists must reasonably fill all prescriptions regardless of their personal views, I understand that's not likely. But HB 257 is a step in the right direction. By allowing pharmacy assistants to distribute such prescriptions as prepackaged birth control, the primary pharmacist can preserve his or her freedom of choice, while allowing patients to receive their medication.

I urge you to pass this measure for medical consumers in Montana.

Sincerely,  
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